

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 003056

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY; BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA;  
EUR/WE /P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA; INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA  
FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR  
AND PASS USTR/PA; USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA;  
ROME/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - EUROPE: UK ELECTIONS, CAPTURE  
OF AL-LIBBI

PARIS - MAY 6, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [11.](#) UK ELECTIONS
- [12.](#) CAPTURE OF AL-LIBBI

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

TONY BLAIR'S RE-ELECTION AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TEN YEARS AT THE ELYSEE ARE THE PRINCIPAL FRONT-PAGE STORIES TODAY. CENTRIST BUSINESS-ORIENTED LA TRIBUNE CALLS THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE RE-ELECTION AND THE ANNIVERSARY "PAINFUL." "TONY BLAIR HAS SET GREAT BRITAIN ON THE COURSE TO GROWTH. WHILE JACQUES CHIRAC'S ACHIEVEMENTS ARE DECIDEDLY LESS BRILLIANT." (SEE PART C)

THE ANNIVERSARY OF JACQUES CHIRAC'S PRESIDENCY PROMPTS A NUMBER OF COMMENTATORS TO FOCUS ON FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY OVER THE LAST DECADE.

IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX'S EDITORIAL, FRANCOIS ERNEWEIN OPINES CONCERNING PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TEN-YEARS IN OFFICE: "THE ASSESSMENT OF HIS LAST TEN YEARS IN OFFICE WILL GREATLY HINGE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE REFERENDUM ON MAY 29. IF THE YES VOTE TAKES IT, THE PRESIDENT'S WORK OVER THE LAST DECADE WILL BE JUSTIFIED. A NO VOTE HOWEVER WOULD MARK THE SECOND MAJOR FAILURE OF HIS MANDATE AFTER THE FAILED DISSOLUTION OF 1997."

FRENCH HISTORIAN NICOLAS BAVEREZ IS INTERVIEWED IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO ON PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN LIGHT OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY. BAVEREZ CRITICIZES FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY AS BEING A "RHETORIC OF POWER WITHOUT THE INSTRUMENT OF POWER" AND ADDS: "FRANCE REMAINS CLOSED IN ITS POSITION OF AN OLD NOSTALGIC COUNTRY OF LOST GRANDEUR ON THE MARGINS OF EUROPE, SPECTATOR OF CURRENT HISTORY BEING WRITTEN IN SPITE OF HER. THE DEADLOCK THAT FRANCE WAS IN FOLLOWING THE RADICAL POSITION IT ADOPTED DURING THE WAR IN IRAQ IS, THANKFULLY, RIGHTING ITSELF DUE TO THE RECONCILIATION EFFORT LED BY GEORGE [W.](#) BUSH AFTER HIS RE-ELECTION; THE END OF THE SYRIAN OCCUPATION OF LEBANON. PROVES THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES CAN OBTAIN POSITIVE RESULTS WHEN THEY WORK TOGETHER."

DORIAN MALOVIC IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX ALSO ANALYZES THIS ANNIVERSARY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY. "A STUDY BY THE PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY ATTITUDES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SHOWS THAT THERE IS A VERY POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY IN THE WORLD. WITH THE NOTEWORTHY EXCEPTION OF THE UNITED STATES WHERE A MAJORITY OF PUBLIC OPINION CONTINUES TO HAVE A NEGATIVE OUTLOOK ON FRANCE." IN ECONOMIC RIGHT-OF-CENTER LES ECHOS' FOREIGN AFFAIRS EDITORIALIST JACQUES HUBERT-RODIER WRITES IN AN ANALYSIS ENTITLED "JACQUES CHIRAC OR TEN YEARS OF CONSTANCY IN FOREIGN POLICY," "BEFORE LEAVING HIS POST A FEW WEEKS AGO U.S. AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE HOWARD H. LEACH STATED: 'NO OTHER FRENCH LEADER HAD EVER ACTIVELY WORKED AGAINST U.S. INTERESTS. WHEN A FRIEND WORKS ACTIVELY AGAINST YOU IT NOT ONLY HURTS YOUR FEELINGS, IT MAKES YOU ANGRY.' DID JACQUES CHIRAC GO TOO FAR IN 2003 BY BRANDISHING THE THREAT OF VETOING ANY RESOLUTION THAT AUTHORIZED USING MILITARY FORCE?"

THE FRIDAY EDITION OF LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE LEADS WITH THE ARREST IN PAKISTAN OF AL QAEDA LEADER ABOU FARAJ AL-LIBBI AND PUTS FORWARD THAT "THIS ARREST GIVES NEW HOPE TO THE AMERICANS IN THEIR HUNT FOR OSSAMA BEN LADEN." (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UK ELECTIONS  
"THE BRITISH LESSON"  
THE EDITORIAL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO BY PIERRE ROUSSELIN (0506): "THE SUCCESS OF THE LABOUR PARTY IS AS MUCH THE SUCCESS OF GORDON BROWN AS IT IS OF TONY BLAIR. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS HAD THE WISDOM TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS AND TO PUSH HIS PROBABLE SUCCESSOR TO THE FRONT LINES AWARE THAT HIS POPULARITY HAD SERIOUSLY SUFFERED AFTER THE WAR IN IRAQ WHICH A MAJORITY OF BRITISH WERE OPPOSED TO."

"THE BRITISH FIRE"  
PATRICK SABATIER'S EDITORIAL IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION  
(05/06): "TONY BLAIR CRUSHED HIS HOPES TO PLACE GREAT BRITAIN  
AT THE HEART OF EUROPE BY SEEKING TO ESTABLISH A `SPECIAL  
RELATIONSHIP' WITH THE U.S."

#### CAPTURE OF AL-LIBBI

"THE CAPTURE OF AL-LIBBI"  
IN REGIONAL LA NOUVELLE REPUBLIQUE DU CENTRE OUEST, JEAN-  
CLAUDE ARBONA WRITES (05/06): "THIS CAPTURE UNDERSCORES THE  
AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO DEFEAT AL QAEDA THAT WAS THE SOURCE  
OF ITS HUMILIATION IN 2001. WILL THIS CAPTURE PUT THE U.S. ON  
THE TRACK OF BEN LADEN? WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, IT IS PROOF OF  
THE PARTNERSHIP THAT THE U.S. HAS ESTABLISHED WITH A NUMBER OF  
COUNTRIES IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM."

"PAKISTANI SUCCESS AGAINST AL QAEDA"  
MARIE-FRANCE CALLE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/05): "IT  
IS A REAL SUCCESS STORY FOR ISLAMABAD AND WASHINGTON. A  
VICTORY IN THE WAR ON TERROR ON THE VERY HAZY BORDER THAT  
SEPARATES PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. THIS CAPTURE WAS MADE  
POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS OF ISLAMABAD WITH  
AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE. TODAY IT WILL BE UP TO THE VERY ANTI-  
AMERICAN PAKISTANI PUBLIC OPINION TO JUDGE THIS COLLABORATIVE  
EFFORT. MUSHARRAF HAS PRACTICALLY TURNED THE HUNT FOR AL QAEDA  
INTO A PERSONAL MATTER. BUT THIS IS INCONSEQUENTIAL WHEN WHAT  
REALLY MATTERS IS AL QAEDA'S ELIMINATION IN PAKISTAN."